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COLLINSON, VIVIENNE; KILLEAVY, MAUREEN; STEPHENSO 98 26P.

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AUTHOR Collinson, Vivienne; Killeavy, Maureen; Stephenson, H. Joan
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ABSTRACT

This study involved a cross-cultural analysis of exemplary teachers' dispositions and the philosophical beliefs that underpinned and informed the ethical dimension of their roles. Four exemplary secondary teachers from each of three countries (England, Ireland, and the U.S.) participated. Participants completed a pre-interview survey then engaged in a 2-3 hour semistructured interview. Researchers audiotaped and transcribed the interviews and conducted follow-up conversations for clarification when necessary. Results indicated that the exemplary teachers viewed respect as a vital foundation for students' best learning and a prerequisite for effective teaching. They worked hard to know students by using multiple sources of knowledge (e.g., solicited critique, dialogues and questions, knowing students informally, knowing from colleagues, and knowing students' cultures). Teachers structured classes to encourage oral and written dialogue that revealed students' thinking. They encouraged student-student and teacher-student relationships. They were able to find a balance among respect for students as human beings, for student individuality, for student success, for the profession, and for themselves. (Contains 22 references.) (SM)

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Exemplary Teachers: Practicing an Ethic of Care in England, Ireland, and the United States

Vivienne Collinson
Grosse Pointe Park, MI

Maureen Killeavy
Dublin College, Ireland

H. Joan Stephenson
de Montford University, Bedford, UK

Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association

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Exemplary Teachers: Practicing an Ethic of Care

in England, Ireland, and the United States

Student learning has always been the expected outcome of competent teaching. Although educators disagree on what constitutes competent professional practice (Elliott, 1993), public disaffection with schools and political dissatisfaction with student test scores have galvanized policymakers to improve student learning. Most recent reforms, explicitly or implicitly, define competence as teachers' subject and pedagogy knowledge. Current reform efforts also generally pay lip service to teachers' ethic of care, but appear to ignore what exemplary teachers have learned: that the dispositions and ethics which precede and accompany teaching profoundly determine how student learning will occur.

To set the stage for learning, caring teachers purposefully know their students well and establish relationships with them. These behaviors reflect the theoretical position that learning takes place best within the crucible of relationships forged by caring competent teachers whose primary focus is the growth and development of students. This study reports a cross-cultural analysis of exemplary teachers' dispositions and philosophical beliefs which underpin and inform the ethical dimension of their roles. It indicates that for exemplary teachers, respect is an indispensable foundation of classroom relationships. Analysis suggests that respect is an essential aspect of an ethic of care, that respect is an undergirding prerequisite effective teaching, and that respect is powerful, multifaceted, and multidirectional.

The context of the investigation included the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, and the United States of America.

A Theoretical Framework for an Ethic of Care in Teaching

There is broad general agreement among theorists that caring is relational. Noddings (1992) describes caring as "an ethic of relation," "a needs- and response-based ethic" that has its own rationality and reasonableness, but whose "emphasis is on living together, on creating, on maintaining, and enhancing positive relations" (p. 21). There is also some agreement that caring individuals recognize and act on the needs of others (e.g., Beck, 1994; Gilligan, 1982) and promote the growth and development of others (Blustein, 1991; Mayeroff, 1971; Purpel, 1989). As such, caring cannot be cloying, sentimental, or self-interested.

In general, "caring, as helping another grow and actualize himself, is a process, a way of relating to someone that involves development" (Mayeroff, 1971, pp. 1-2). More specifically, Mayeroff's (1971) conceptualization of caring requires eight "ingredients:" knowing the recipient, patience, honesty, trust, humility, hope, courage, and alternating rhythms (evaluating and modifying behaviors or strategies to better help the recipient). It is noteworthy that while respect may be implied in the literature, theories of an ethic of care rarely mention explicitly or discuss respect as fundamental to caring.

Although caring is "the act of affirming and encouraging the best in others" (Noddings, 1992, p. 25), caring also encourages the best in oneself. Noddings (1994) argued that for teachers, caring implies competence: Wanting the best for students leads caring teachers to become increasingly competent themselves. Caring

involves "an orientation of deep concern that carries us out of ourselves and into the lives, despairs, struggles, and hopes of others. To care is to respond, and to respond responsibly, we must continually strive for increased competence" (p. ix-x). This suggests that caring not only implies competence; it implies that caring teachers know their students and create relationships in which learning can flourish.

Mayeroff (1971) is one of few theorists who emphasized knowing as the primary ingredient of caring. He argued that "caring . . . includes explicit and implicit knowledge, knowing that and knowing how, and direct and indirect knowledge, all related in various ways to helping the other grow" (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 21). Through knowing others as individuals, caregivers can examine how their behavior affects a given situation and how tc modify their behavior to better help another individual.

If the growth and development of others is the primary goal of persons who operate from an ethic of care, teaching surely is a profession in which an ethic of care should be central. However, "much of the formal scholarship in English, save for that of a small group of educational philosophers, has for decades avoided any serious consideration of the moral and ethical aspects of teaching" (Fenstermacher, 1992, p. 95). The lack of serious discussion about an ethic of care in the national policies of the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the United States continues to reflect a longstanding tradition in education: An ethic of care is "only rarely an explicitly stated objective of formal education, although it is a frequently recognized and valued by-product" (Berscheid, 1985, p. 61).

The Official Role of an Ethic of Care in Teaching

The official role of an ethic of care in teaching differs in each country. The recent National Curriculum in the United Kingdom, while not referring explicitly to an ethic of care, makes teachers responsible for the spiritual, moral, and cultural development of their students. The "Handbook for the Inspection of Schools" (OFSTED, 1994) requires inspectors to evaluate how the school promotes spiritual, moral, and cultural aspects along with pupil progress in subject areas, implying that an ethic of care is expected of teachers. In reality, the focus of teacher education and evaluation is almost exclusively on teacher competency in subject knowledge and skills. The caring side of teaching is no longer viewed as consistent with "effectiveness."

In Ireland, most state schools are also denominational and "the historically strong religious element in Irish society [90% Roman Catholic] provides a coherence of beliefs and attitudinal dispositions which permeates the education process in the state" (Killeavy, 1998, p. 65). Only recently has the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment proposed broader courses such as "Civic, Social, and Political Education" and redesigned science programs to emphasize critical thinking and inquiry. While religious values are almost synonymous with general social values, a recent study indicated that Irish teachers value honesty, fairness, care for others, tolerance, independence of thought, autonomy of the individual, cooperation, and self-respect (Killeavy, 1998). Thus, an ethic of care may be assumed to undergird the teaching of all disciplines in Ireland, but it tends to be most explicit in religious education.

In the United States, the recent Report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) states that "competent and caring teaching should be a student right" (p. 6). Strikingly absent in this "blueprint for recruiting, preparing, and supporting excellent teachers" (p. vi) is any further mention of caring or what a caring teacher might do. The document focuses on teacher competence and associates competence with program accreditation, more rigorous formal preparation of teachers, and official credentials.

The absence of a discussion of an ethic of care in the American report, along with little explicit discussion in England and Ireland, is significant in light of increasing recognition of the association between an ethic of care and good teaching (e.g., Comer, 1988; Heath, 1994; Noddings, 1994; Rogers & Webb, 1991) and the growing literature on caring in education (e.g., Beck, 1994; Blustein, 1991; Collinson, 1996; Deiro, 1996; Noddings, 1988; Stephenson, Ling, Burman, & Cooper, 1998). Emphasis on teacher competence is insufficient; policies and credentials do not guarantee caring teachers or student learning. Competence must be motivated by an ethic of care so teachers can bring out the best in students.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study, undertaken with practicing teachers in second level schools in England, Ireland, and the United States, sought to determine exemplary teachers' understanding of the role and development of an ethic of care in good teaching. Exemplary teachers are defined as those whose professional accomplishments and results can serve as a model for peers.

The sample was determined by reputational method (Hunter, 1953). Teachers in England (n=4) and Ireland (n=4) were identified by peers, principals, local inspectors or educational advisors, university faculty whose students had been interns in their classes, or a combination of these. In the United States (n=4), peers identified the sample. The combined sample included 7 female teachers and 5 male teachers with a range of 15 to 35 years of classroom experience in English, maths and technology, sciences, humanities, history, French, and Spanish. The ten White and two Black teachers represented rural, suburban, city, and inner city contexts. Participation was voluntary and anonymity was guaranteed.

Participants filled out a pre-interview survey, then engaged in a two to three hour interview. A semi-structured interview guide provided flexibility for differences in cultural contexts and researcher styles. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed; follow-up conversations provided clarification when necessary. Content analysis provided a basis for comparative examination.

Knowing: The Foundation for Caring

Mayeroff (1971) argued that knowing is the primary ingredient of an ethic of care. The exemplary teachers in this study appear to intuitively understand Mayeroff's premise: They seize or create opportunities anywhere to learn to know students, but knowing "mostly happens in the classroom. Of course, you might discuss the football scores or an event casually in the corridors, but the significant knowledge and interaction are in the classroom."[1] For example, "the tutor time is very useful because you can talk to [students] about good things that are going to

happen, who is going to do something exciting at the weekend, what did I do at the weekend."[1]

Interactions may be formal or informal. For one teacher, "the key way [of knowing] is . . . through [students'] work, observing them, talking to them."[1] For another, "it's assessing their performance and behaviour on what you've come to know they're capable of."[1] Knowing students' capabilities allows teachers to individually and realistically challenge all students to learn: "On the whole, I get to know the students through their work. And ear-marking the tasks suitable for them, like challenging them realistically."[1] But regardless of where and how knowing occurs for teachers, respect is a fundamental expectation for students: "I expect a climate of respect for one another, [and] I will show them the same respect that I expect in return."[2] Along with respect, the teachers' ultimate goal is bringing out the best in students: "And in the classroom, beyond everything else, I work with changing the child's attitude. . . bringing the best out."[2]

Knowing Through Solicited Critique

Another way of knowing students is through shared assessment of both the students and the teacher. By requesting information and criticism, the teacher coveys respect for everyone as a learner, communicates that teachers are learners too, and models self-evaluation and critique as learning tools:

> One of the things that I do is having the kids do a self-assessment on Friday's. And the kids have three questions that they're supposed to answer: They're supposed to name something they did well that week, they're supposed to name something that they need to work on or that they need help with, and

then the third question is something that [I] can do to help them be a better student. . . And when I bring [their work] home, I look at every one over the weekend and write a comment on it. And then they're supposed to write a comment on mine and give it back to me. And generally what I do is I respond to the third [question] of something that I can do to help them be a better student. And I respond as to whether [their suggestion] is something that I can do. And if it's not, then I say, "Could we try this instead?"[2]

These teachers do not assume that learning respectful ways to critique comes naturally to students, so they use themselves as recipients on which students can practice. In turn, the teacher learns what is helping or hindering student learning:

I think it's also important that the children have some opportunity at a later time, not necessarily at that time depending on the situation, to feed back to you about the way you are dealing with them and the way you care about them. And if then they are unhappy with what you do, you know that [there is] a respectful way, you know that there is an opportunity for them to talk to you about it. And I will say to children, "If I have done something that you are not happy with, by all means come back and talk to me."[1]

Not only do these teachers show respect for students' thinking by inviting questions and critique, they legitimate students' judgments of the teacher if they are accurate. They also communicate to students that teachers are not the sole knowledge-bearers in the classroom, but rather, that teachers also have much to learn from students.

Knowing Through Dialogue and Questions

Unlike traditional classes where teachers' sharing of knowledge with students is unidirectional, teachers in this study create opportunities for multidirectional dialogues so they know how students are thinking. One teacher discovered that many immigrant students who could not read English had been placed with their same age, native born American peers. She also had students who could "read" by pronouncing the words, but who did not comprehend what they had read:

> I have had to read on my own to try to learn how to teach these kids to read, which is thinking. And it's much more difficult to teach [reading] than it is to teach writing because writing is overt and I can see [it]. So I have to create situations where there is overt behavior so I can analyze how they are thinking and teach them how to make connections, to have dialogues about what they're reading with themselves, to make connections which is what good readers do all the time. But if they haven't had it modeled, it's different from learning how to pronounce the words.[2]

Written dialogues are more overt, but they also demand respect for confidentiality. Caring teachers make a point of providing a safety net for students:

> English is a very personal subject in that sense because the kids are writing out of themselves, out of their own experience. It's impossible not to find out about them. Sometimes I've got to say stop, particularly in drama, and say, "You don't have to be personal about this" or "You don't have to base the character on yourself." That's another of the strategies that's very useful . . . and you set it up in a safe way so that they are talking about themselves but

they are structuring it as a character in a play or something. This is a convention that we both know about and sometimes this leads to talking about the character they are writing about and I know they are talking personally.[3]

These teachers' reasoning for fostering dialogue is consistently to find out what students think so the teachers can push students' learning further. Any information may provide a clue. "I want to know what they are reading to find books that would interest them. The parents come in and say, 'The house is full of books but Johnny never reads.' And I would have to say, 'What does Johnny like to do?' to see if we can find a subject that would interest him."[3] Another teacher, through dialogue, emphasizes the importance of thinking, as well as respect for sources of knowledge other than the teacher:

> Every Tuesday, they have to bring in a current event article that has to do with math, science, or technology. . . . And they have to write up a short summary of it and then what they thought about it, how it affected them. . . . When they do go through their articles, even if it's one that I just read about, I always ask them lots of questions and it's very clear that I'm very interested in how and what they're learning about and what they think about it. . . . [They see it] by how excited I get as they are struggling with ideas.[2]

Knowing Students Informally

Even though caring teachers rely on getting to know students' thinking and interests in the classroom, they also use informal contacts such as home visits, chance meetings in the community, or school journeys to show their interest in

students and to keep paths of communication open. They are very aware of what they are doing and why they are doing it. "I always try and find time to try and speak to as many children as I can. If I'm on break duty for example, I will have a joke, ask what they are doing and things like that. . . so they get to know you and you get to know them."[1] Occasionally, teachers create informal situations: "If I have to walk out of the classroom to a destination for some reason or another, I [will say], 'I want you to come with me. Will you be my bodyguard today?' You know, whatever. 'Let's go for a walk.' Whatever it is to open them up."[2]

Sometimes informal contacts allow the teachers to demonstrate support and a positive attitude for students:

> I think it's important to see them outside the classroom because that's another way I can connect with them and say, "I went to your game last night and I really was proud of the way you played." Or if the kid has sat on the bench the whole time, I can say, "I really admire the fact that you were out there at practice every day and that you are a team player." So at least I can reinforce that idea of team spirit and all for one and one for all. And there's a great deal of hard work that goes into any extracurricular activity.[2]

In other situations, teachers can show respect for students as human beings, even if the student's behavior is unacceptable: "I'm always rushing and I'm always late for class, but I feel that it is important to spend two minutes talking to someone in the corridor. Or not undermining discipline, but if there is somebody outside the office, I might say, 'How are you doing?' or 'What's happened?' "[3] Teachers noted that when students know teachers outside the classroom, discipline problems inside

the classroom diminish. They also note that respect, rather than authority or control, is more helpful in maintaining discipline: "If you have respect, you don't need to go for power; you have it."[2]

Knowing From Colleagues

Knowing about students from colleagues requires caveats. The teachers worry about labelling students prematurely. They listen to colleagues' academic or personal assessments of students from the preceding level or school, but guard against carrying forward negative perspectives that may affect what they observe for themselves. Essentially, they want to enrich their knowledge of students and to support them: "We've . . . got a daily board in the staff room so, you know, if a child is grieving or a parent is ill or something or a new baby, then you write the notes there."[1] The teachers also listen to colleagues because they recognize that their perspective is not the full or only picture of any student: "[Colleagues] help to give you a rounded picture of the child. Often you don't recognize them as the same person. That is why I try to develop space for them to be whatever they want to present as 'them' in my classes."[1]

The teachers are aware of possible legal issues and of the necessity to respect confidentiality of student information, whether there is a formal structure for collegial sharing or not. In one school,

> there is a set procedure . . . if there is a problem with a child. Every week, every year [grade level] team has meetings and one of the items on the agenda every week is problem-children, or children who are giving cause for concern, or children who are doing well, to report back. So as we're going

down the corridor, if you see that child, "Well done, Jane. I've heard some good things about you today". . . . Also children giving cause for concern outside school, Child Protection issues which are very confidential. . . I warn the staff if there is any problem with this child, let me know. Be aware that he might be a little bit emotional this week, etc. And you can't give anything away, but, you know.[1]

Knowing Students' Cultures

Although teachers use the classroom most to know students, and informal contacts and colleagues as secondary sources of knowledge, they also pay attention to knowing students' cultures outside the school. One inner city teacher knew that a student had been sleeping in a different abandoned building each night and trying to keep it secret from her peers. He understood that for her, finding a roof was far more pressing than doing homework. Another teacher knew that although her school neighborhood appeared pleasant on the surface, there were hidden problems distracting her students:

I think that with some of the children . . . that I have taught, ... you are the only stable influence in their lives. Some of the poor mites that we've got have such terrible home lives that they come to school and that's the only stability that they have. . . They know what that day is going to be like and they know that they are safe with you. They know that they are going to be happy during the school day. I think it's very, very important to be consistent with that.[1]

Respect: The Foundation for Relationships

The teachers in this study discussed three kinds of relationships they try to establish in the classroom: the teacher-student relationship, student-student relationships, and the student-teacher relationship. These relationships illustrate the multifaceted nature of respect that characterizes exemplary teachers' classrooms as they set the stage for student learning.

Teacher-Student Relationships

Teachers make a clear distinction between professional relationships and friendships with students. As several explained, they "don't feel the need to, sort of, create friendship,"[1] although they are friendly. However, they are aware that the professional teacher-student relationship, which is inherently unequal, can set up barriers, blocking the approachability that is so necessary for making students feel comfortable and secure in the classroom. They seem to create, from the first day of classes, an atmosphere of mutual respect with reciprocal but differing responsibilities and rights:

> I am friends with them but they know that there is a difference between student and teacher. And I've always made that line clear. I think the students, they come to my room and they know what to expect. They know I am the adult there, they are the student, I am reachable. I'm not off in this never, never land they cannot reach.[2]

There is always the danger that students will think that "teachers are wheeled out at the beginning of the day and they are wheeled back again into the cupboard [at

the end of the day] and that you weren't human beings."[1] Because these teachers respect reciprocity, they know they have to give in order to get: "You want to share in [students'] lives, so they've got to share a little bit in your life as well. So you've got to give a little bit. You can't be a remote anonymous individual, so you tell anecdotes about the family."[1] However, they are careful not to cross the professional line in disclosing personal information.

The teachers exemplify respect for the profession by setting aside personal problems in order to put students first. They are honest and open with the students, but they are also humble enough to admit that occasionally, they cannot meet the ideal of doing their best, an ideal they also ask of their students:

> It depends on what you are happy, sad, or upset with. If it's something within the classroom that [the students] have done, then I think that needs to be shared with them. I think that if it's something . . . from your personal life, then no, . . . I'm leaving that outside the classroom. . . Which can be incredibly difficult if you're not feeling good, if you've got problems. . . I will say to the children "Well, I'm not very good today. My patience isn't as good as it could be. Can you help and be kind to me? . . . I want you to do something very quiet today, and this is the reason why." And I find that if you are open with the kids like that, . . . you get it back. If you don't, and you're aggravated by things and you can feel yourself rising, it ultimately affects them. It definitely has a very adverse effect on them.[1]

The teachers know that students also have personal problems and bad days. They emphasized the importance of "showing [students] that you are interested in

them personally, by letting them see that you can appreciate particular difficulties and how they are dealing with them. By the odd word, just so long as you do not embarrass them in front of their friends."[3] Preventing loss of respect in front of peers is paramount.

Not only are exemplary teachers honest with students about having a bad day, they are honest about their own limitations and fallibility: "You know, I am not a saint by any means. . . In fact, I think perhaps that helps. They know that I'm not a saint."[1] Another teacher expressed a common view by saying, "I don't have the need to be right all the time."[2]

But it is how teachers handle admission of failures and coming to terms with their weaknesses that helps children learn. This may go beyond the necessity "to admit a mistake, to apologize. We all have bad days."[3] As one teacher explained: "I always tried, you know, with my sense of humour and with the relationships that I've built up with children, [to admit] that I am human, that I make mistakes. I do get things wrong, but they can trust me. . . If I get something wrong, I'll put it right."[1] Another teacher lost her temper one day and apologized. But she too felt compelled to turn her bad behavior into a teachable moment, "to go through with the kids, 'Okay, what's a way that we could have handled this situation so that what happened wouldn't happen? Okay, what's happened is what's happened. We can't undo it, let's just get beyond it and let's think about ways of it not happening in the future.' "[2] The teachers may privately agonize over failures: "You come out of the lesson and you . . . think, 'I've failed at that. . . . I've had this awful, awful day' and you go home . . . and you feel very pessimistic about it."[1] They may also share the

experience with colleagues to help restore their perspective: "We all have bad days and it's accepting that it is a bad day and not the whole thing."[1]

Student-Student Relationships

Just as teachers need to seek peer support, especially when things have not gone well, students also need the support of peers as they practice learning to handle relationships. One teacher commented on her expectations of how students should treat peers, based on how she treats them:

> I would expect them to be loyal to each other and to look out for their classmates. I would expect them to take responsibility for the atmosphere in the classroom. I would like to know that they were developing an increasingly mature understanding of human relationships. On this, they will take their cue from me. I mean, they will do what I do, not what I say.[3]

When teachers model respect for individual development of maturity and insist on mutual respect, students eventually get the message: "It works well. You get children saying [to the teacher], 'Could you go and talk to that girl in year eight over there. She's all on her own and I'm frightened she might be being bullied.' So it's like a sort of home watch thing and it, it seems to work quite well."[1]

Student-Teacher Relationships

The literature rarely discusses how children can and do support teachers they respect. As noted above, students watch closely the actions and reactions of teachers. They particularly appreciate an atmosphere where they can respectfully correct or question a teacher's action: "Kids love to feel they have given the teacher something . . . a bit of information the teacher was unaware of, or they get a kick out of spotting

a mistake. If the teacher can receive this with grace, it can create an atmosphere of reciprocity which is beneficial."[3]

One teacher who had worked on mutual respect with students was disappointed one day to discover that as she entered the classroom, "there was a fight going on." Instead of berating the children, she said to them, "I feel a complete failure. . . All I ever wanted to do was to make you nice to each other and I've failed completely because you're fighting.' And they all screamed, 'No, you haven't failed. You're not a failure.' "[1] This teacher understood that respect takes a long time for students to learn, and that students, like teachers, make mistakes and sometimes have a bad day.

An Ethic of Care: The Foundation for Learning

Caring promotes the growth and development of others (Mayeroff, 1971) by "affirming and encouraging the best in others" (Noddings, 1992, p. 25). This fundamental purpose of caring was clear in teachers' philosophies. As one put it, "I work with changing the child's attitude . . . . bringing the best out."[2] Another said, "I have a pin that I wear [each day] that says 'Educating with Love' and that's really my philosophy. . . that every child in my classroom is not only worthy of but deserves to be loved. And if you sort of look at it from that point of view, it makes a lot of things that would irritate you be not such big things after all."[2] Still another teacher noted, "I think that . . . what keeps me going as a teacher is the belief that this work is important work. All children, and particularly the children with special needs that I work with, are entitled to a high quality education service."[3]

What is clear about caring teachers is that they respect each student as independent individuals: "I don't want them to be like me necessarily,"[1] said one teacher. Another teacher was very clear about not wanting students to be little clones of him: "I tell the children, 'I'm not trying to make you a copy of anybody. You were born an original and I was, so I'm not going to die a copy.' "[2]

In the classroom, respect for students as independent individuals means "giving them the space to construct themselves"[1] and finding "a way of helping each student as an individual, to take them from where they are at as a starting point and progress from there. A good teacher must make her subject comprehensible and must show students how to progress and achieve whatever their level of ability."[3] However, these teachers understand that ability left unschooled does not show respect for the potential in each student: "Being welcoming and sincere is not enough; there is a need to challenge them, to give them the sense that they are individuals with needs, skills--in a sense, really giving them something that can change their experience of the world."[1]

Expectations for students are high, although the teachers respect that intellectual differences require different strategies and result in different rates of learning. "The teacher cares for [students], is interested in them, firstly as a person and secondly, . . . in their academic performance. . . A teacher . . . would not teach them any faster than they are capable of learning and yet would give them some push."[3] Respect for intellectual differences means that these teachers alter instruction for individuals, but they do not demean students by lowering their expectation that everyone will do their best:

I try not to let knowledge of their backgrounds influence my expectations of them, but at the same time, if I know someone comes from a background that is not, let us say, conducive to learning, then I'll take that into account when I'm planning work and support for them. It will change my approach to the child's learning, but not to expectations of their achievement. I believe, given the right circumstances, everyone can succeed.[1]

"The right circumstances" include appropriate pedagogy to support the teacher's high expectations, but they also include ways for allowing students to save face by improving their performance when they do not give their best: "You can demonstrate this, when you're more mature and assured, by, for instance, saying, 'Is this really what you're giving me?' and on occasions with some individuals, 'This isn't good enough. Go away and do it again.' "[1]

The right circumstances also include expectations that second level students should take responsibility for their own learning: "I am very interested in them as people and . . . I consider them very important. I regularly tell them that they are very important and that they owe it to themselves to ask me questions when they don't understand, and that they should use the classroom to learn skills other than the lesson."[3] In this way, caring teachers legitimate the idea that because individuals learn at different rates, students may not understand something the first time it is presented. The teachers also legitimate questioning which requires self-assessment and which remains one of the best ways to learn.

The exemplary teachers in this study do not differentiate between an ethic of care and learning: "One compliments the other, doesn't it?"[1] Both are seen as

equally important in the development of the whole child: "I think I . . . usually make huge steps in knowing [students] to begin with and then other things . . . just little revelations, you know, help you to complete the pattern."[1] When they know the student and have established a mutually respectful relationship with the student, the real work of learning can begin.

Conclusion

The role of respect as a primary aspect of an ethic of care in teaching is neglected in the theoretical literature on caring. However, exemplary teachers clearly view respect as a vital foundation for students' best learning and a prerequisite for effective teaching. Respect is a powerful substitute for authority. As noted earlier, "If you have respect, you don't need to go for power; you have it."[2] One teacher believes that respect is so foundational that she spends much of the first week of the academic year incorporating team building activities: "If I can get them to care about one another and I can set the stage for respect in interaction, then I think I've got it licked."

To set the stage for respect in interactions, caring teachers work hard to know students by using multiple sources of knowledge and by structuring their classes to encourage oral and written dialogue that reveals students' thinking. They consciously work to create a classroom atmosphere conducive to questioning, self-assessment, and helpful critique. They also take great care to establish three kinds of relationships: teacher-student relationships, student-student relationships, and student-teacher relationships:

> I think there is a tone that has to be established in a class, a tone of respect that is communicated to the students by respect for them, but also expecting respect from them, and by respect for each other.[3]

This teacher added that regardless of students' backgrounds or cultures, respect is "a bottom line that [has] to be set up."[3]

In summary, the exemplary teachers in the samples from the three countries, England, Ireland, and the United States, appear to have developed aspects of an ethic of care to a consistent and recognizable degree. They confirmed Mayeroff's (1971) ingredients of care, but indicated that respect is also an essential aspect of an ethic of care. What their interviews revealed is that respect is powerful, multidirectional, and multifaceted. The teachers seem to have found a balance among respect for students as human beings, respect for student individuality, respect for student success, respect for the profession, and respect for themselves. The mutual respect they try to establish in their classrooms carries reciprocal but differing responsibilities and rights for both the teacher and the students.

Current reforms aiming for increased teacher competence give cursory attention to the role of an ethic of care in effective teaching. Instead, they focus on teacher credentials, program accreditation, and student test results. These are easy to measure or describe in comparison to the complexity of knowing students and establishing respectful relationships as described by exemplary teachers. The teachers' remarks indicate that policymakers are focusing on competence when they should be concentrating on caring as the motivation for competence. Teaching is a profession that relies as much on skilful human relations as it does on subject

matter and pedagogical skills. The reforms in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the United States are not likely to strengthen teaching or improve student learning significantly as long as the focus on teacher competence overshadows the role of an ethic of care in exemplary teaching and ignores the role of respect in bringing out the best in all students.

Endnotes

[1]Quotations are from the United Kingdom sample.

[2]Quotations are from the American sample.

[3]Quotations are from the Irish sample.

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